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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Union College Character Research Project designed to study the development of self-regard in children, ages 2-5. Evaluation instruments and curricular materials were developed for parents to use at home with their children. Seven scales to measure the development of self-regard were constructed: (1) Socially Acceptable Behavior, (2) Children's Responses to Requests, (3) Completing Tasks, (4) Coping with Fears, (5) Developing Imagination in Play, (6) Dealing with Frustrations, and (7) Developing Skills for a Purpose. A methodology for creating teaching materials keyed to five points on each scale was devised. Some implications for extension of this methodological approach are suggested. An appendix, which makes up more than one-half the document, describes the project's background research and the construction of the scales. Also described is the field testing of Scale 6 (Dealing with Frustrations). (CS)

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RESEARCH DESIGN FOR EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-REGARD IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Research Design for Exploring the
Development of Self-Regard in Preschool Children

Introduction

During the past decade the literature on childhood has been filled with statements of the educational, developmental, and psychological importance of the very early childhood years. Babies have been brought into the laboratories. Teachers have gone into the homes of infants, nursery schools and day-care centers have blossomed across the land. While there is apparent a general acceptance of the need to somehow take advantage of the educational potential in those early childhood years, there is presently no consensus on how to go about such early education.

In this prospectus, the current research at the Union College Character Research Project will be described. The focus here will be education for attitudes and values, for children 2 - 5 years of age, carried out in the home by parents. The assumption has been made that a parent can give individualized teaching to his/her child, and that such teaching carries the greatest potential for effective learning on the part of the child. The teaching-learning opportunities in the home of a preschool child has assets not found in other educational locations or, at least, not to the high degree found in the child's own home. Love, encouragement, and a vision for the child are all important ingredients of a learning climate that one can, in most cases, expect in the home. Parents' intimate knowledge of their own child and their constant, day-by-day contacts with that child are also invaluable assets.

All too often, however, these home teaching-learning opportunities are wasted, because parents do not know how to use these assets to the best advantage. Two areas where parents need help can be identified. To make maximum use of their educational assets, parents need:

1. Evaluative instruments, in order to measure their child's level of development.
2. Curricular materials, which may be adapted to their child at that child's level of development.

These two areas of concern are the focus of research at the Character Research Project. A further focus is the development of positive Self-Regard for the preschool child. Seven scales to measure development of Self-Regard have been constructed. Initial experience shows that curricular materials can be designed and developed that are directly related to each of the seven scales.

A distinctive feature of this approach is that it helps (and educates) adults to be more effective parents, a combination that probably cannot be found anywhere else. There have been (and are) evaluative instruments, particularly for motor development and, recently, a few for social development. There also have been lesson-like materials for parents to use in the home. However, it is the combination of developmental scales and correlated teaching materials that makes the present CRP research approach both unique and important.

Construction of the Seven Scales for Self-Regard*

It is assumed that developing positive self-regard in preschool children is an important, even essential, part of their education. An innovative technique for measuring such self-regard has been developed by the author and her colleagues. Self-regard, or self-image, is not to be treated as a single variable but, rather, as a global construct that is made up of some seven identifiable components. Each of these seven components is to be understood as an interaction of more basic personality elements. Therefore, seven scales are being developed to measure these seven interactions that constitute the global construct of Self-Regard. The five scale points on any of these scales describe a sequence of developmental levels which culminate in the maturation potentially possible for a preschool child.

The sequencing of scale points has been based on a methodology that involves analyzing case study reports of highly motivated and highly endowed children 24 - 30 months of age, whose parents have supplied data as they used a research curriculum with their own child. One such scale was field tested in early February, 1974, with some 90 parents at a mid-western diocesan preschool workshop. The results of this field test indicate that the scale does, in fact, span the ages from 2 to 5 years and that it also does, in fact, measure development.

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* The reader is directed to the appendix for more information, if it should be desired. Background research and the relation of scales to the Peatling-Tiedeman theoretical model are examined.

Proposed Field Testing of Scales

Present plans call for an initial field testing of the other six scales during the spring and summer of 1974. A sample of 100 parents of preschool children will be sought. The results will indicate revisions which will be accomplished in order to continue further field testing.

Creation of Curricular Materials

A methodology for creating teaching materials keyed to Scale Points has been devised. There were five curricular kits, one for each scale point of the first completed scale, that were constructed for the workshop mentioned earlier. The reception of these kits indicates how to proceed with others. The purpose of each of these curricular kits is to take a child at the evaluated level described by a scale point and help that child move on toward the next scale point.

An initial goal of the presently ongoing research is the creation and testing of a set of seven scales for measuring Self-Regard, and the providing of each scale with five scale point keyed curricular kits. When that goal is reached, it would be possible for a parent to choose a scale, rate his child and, based on the rating, go to appropriate teaching materials. With seven Self-Regard scale ratings of his own child in hand, at any one time, a parent would have seven appropriate kits (one per scale) with which to work.

After a period of time, a parent could again rate a child and, if progress had been made to a new level for any particular scale, a new kit would become available.

It is important to remember that children move at their own pace. What one child can accomplish in two months, another child may require a year to accomplish. This calls for flexibility such as is provided in the type of developmental curriculum envisioned here.

The construction of curricular kits, the field testing of those kits and, then, the revision of the materials, is a lengthy process. As that process continues, however, parallel research studies with the seven scales of Self-Regard will accumulate, and they will provide much needed information about the actual development of the global construct of positive Self-Regard in preschool children.

Implications for Extensions of the Methodology

The research outlined so far in this Prospectus is only one of several uses of the basic methodology that has been developed. By following the methodology iteratively, investigations and curriculum development for the other fourteen elements in the Peatling/Tiedeman theoretical model are possible at the preschool level. However, not only can additional preschool curriculum be devised, the methodology can be used to create a curriculum for older children.

For example, data from highly advantaged five-year-olds in the CRP population could be studied for the Self-Regard interactions and seven scales could be produced that probably would be useful to parents of children in the early elementary grades. Theoretically, it would be possible to construct scales to measure the development of Self-Regard from the preschool years through the high school years. It should also be possible to develop curricular materials for every scale point along all of these scales. Conceivably, scales could be used as self-measurement devices with older children who are capable of assuming a responsibility for their own self-assessment and, even, their own self-development.

The scales of Self-Regard can perform a variety of possible services. For both parents and students they may be educational devices, in addition to being evaluative instruments. As the scale point descriptions are read, information about normal behavior and about what can be expected of children as they develop and mature, is transmitted. This may be unfamiliar information to many parents, yet, in many cases, it may prove to also be reassuring information.

The possible service of the Self-Regard scales to basic research in child development should not be overlooked. These scales make possible a new and potentially profitable method of studying the development of a complex developmental maturation during early childhood. The seven Self-Regard scales may also be of great interest to numerous investigators in several behavioral science disciplines. The interest of such colleagues in research into child development is actively sought. It is to be hoped that this Prospectus will kindle that interest on the part of the reader, who may contact the author by writing:

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Appendix

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

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Appendix

BACKGROUND

How Positive Self-Regard was Identified

The decision to make Self-Regard a theme for research evolved out of three pieces of work. First, the existing CRP curriculum for the ages 2 to 3 years was analyzed, in order to identify what, in fact, was being taught. Five thematic clusters of lessons were found, the lessons in these clusters taught positive attitudes about 1) Social Behavior, 2) Family Cooperation, 3) the World, 4) the Child's Self-Regard, and 5) Appreciation for Others. In addition, two studies probed the research question "with which of the five areas are parents most concerned for their nursery-age child?" One study involved coding and rating almost 100 "Personality Descriptions," wherein parents had written open-ended descriptions of their own nursery-age child. The data from the "Personality Descriptions" was coded for evidence of these five areas. The criterion for the subsequent ratings involved indications of the amount of expressed parental concern. This study of a sample of parents showed that their greatest expressed concern was for their child's Self-Regard.

In a second study, a questionnaire was sent to 90 parents, who were asked to rank-order these five areas of positive attitudes from the one they considered most important to the one considered least important for a hypothetical parent-taught home-based nursery curriculum. Again, the clear result from a sample of 90 of their rankings was that positive Self-Regard was the area of most concern to parents.

The Identification of the Seven Scales for Self-Regard

The greater part of the research carried on at the present time by CRP is directly related to a theoretical model. The first published description of this model appeared in 1970, when it was reported by Dr. E. M. Ligon, who created the original model. Since that time, the 1970 Ligon model has been refined, clarified, and expanded by Dr. J. H. Peatling. Theoretical applications of Dr. Peatling's work have been recognized by Dr. D. V. Tiedeman. As a result, a book-length manuscript by Drs. Peatling and Tiedeman has been written and currently awaits publication. Practical applications at both the level of basic research and the level of applied research have been developed by Dr. L.W.

Barber. The research described in this Prospectus into Self-Regard is one example of the application possibilities of this theoretical model.

The Peatling-Tiedeman model is an hierarchical structure, the elements of which follow the principles of a mathematical group at each of its various levels. One of the elements of personality at one of the model's hierarchical levels is Self-Image. The principles of a mathematical group indicate that there are eight constituting components of Self-Image. One of these components involves the principle of identity and a practical application does not appear useful at this time. The other seven components involve the interactions of fourteen elements in personality which result in a fifteenth element, Self-Image.

This approach to the study of Self-Image offers the important advantage of regarding a global construct as having multiple, distinct, yet measurable components, which may be studied either separately or in a dynamic relationship with one another. The Peatling-Tiedeman group model offers a road map, as it were, that can guide one's study of what is,admittedly, a very complex construct, one's Self-Image.

The seven Self-Regard scales each measure one of these seven components of the global construct of Self-Image. The term Self-Regard replaces the term Self-Image (in these scales) for the sole reason that it was judged to have greater communication potential for parents. A list of the seven scales follows in Table I. Table I includes scale titles, prose descriptions of the interactions and, finally, the basic symbolic equations from the Peatling-Tiedeman group model. Normally, laymen receive only the scale titles and the descriptive phrases. (The phrases in Table I identify only the high end of each scale, where positive Self-Regard results.)

TABLE I

The Seven Self-Regard Scales

Scale Title	Descriptive Phrase	Symbolic Equation
Socially Acceptable Behavior	Learning to evaluate behavior and to adjust when frustrated	M o X → S
Children's Responses to Requests	Learning to cooperate willingly with parental requests	D o H → S
Completing Tasks	Learning to persist in activities	A o C → S
Coping with Fears	Learning to put fears into perspective	G o J → S
Developing Imagination in Play	Learning to broaden world perspective by using imagination	W o P → S
Dealing with Frustration	Learning roles for channeling emotions positively	L o R → S
Developing skills for A Purpose	Learning skills in order to increase potential	E o V → S

It should be noted that scale titles and descriptive phrases are interpretations of the symbolic equations at the preschool level. These interpretations have been based on two sources of information about children of preschool age: 1) what the CRP curriculum and research data-bank indicates about preschoolers, and 2) what the literature of early childhood development indicates about preschoolers. This dual use of resources will be described in a later section of this document.

Construction of the Seven Scales

The methodology developed for the construction of these scales combined a theoretical approach with an empirical approach. The first step, identifying what the scales were to measure, has been described above. The group model defined the scales generally. The CRP data and the literature allowed us to relate those general scale definitions more specifically to the age level. These two things – theory

and the literature -- provided the over-all definitions for each scale.

Next, definitions for the several scale points on each scale were developed. This next step involved work with empirical data. These data consisted of parent reports from a select sample of parents who had been or were enrolled in the CRP's Infancy Design program. These parents had been using a research curriculum with their children since birth. Their reports for the period when their own children were between 24 and 30 months of age were submitted to a content analysis. The sample was quite small (n = 20), and it does represent children who are highly advantaged for growth in positive attitudes. However, the data was current and did reflect contemporary parenting.

Three trained judges coded each of these open-ended reports for evidence of each of the seven Self-Regard interactions. Where judge agreement was adequate, the data was accepted as an example of evidence for a scale. Such examples were next rated on a five-point scale from least mature to most mature. Reliability between three judges was controlled by accepting examples of evidence for a scale point only when all three judges agreed in their rating.

Initial descriptions of scale points were created by a method of seeking characteristic differences between examples of evidence located at each of the various points of a given scale. A next step was to further refine these scale-point descriptions. During this step, we turned back to the literature on early childhood development. This turned out to be a difficult task, because the scales describe personality element interactions (which is a relatively new approach in describing human behavior). For example, the symbolic interaction G o J $\rightarrow$ S had been interpreted, at the preschool level of development, to refer to "putting fears into perspective." The literature of early childhood is concerned with fears; but it tends to list kinds of fears, the ages when they occur, and the degree of arousal, etc. Only by the exercise of informed inference does the literature of early childhood give one any information on "putting fears into perspective."

Another difficulty encountered at this step was that the initial descriptions of each scale point came from reports of children between 24 and 30 months of age. While these children are undoubtedly accelerated in their attitude formation, and thus may legitimately be compared to much older children, their specific behaviors may not appear to be a realistic behavioral description to a parent of a late four- or five-year-old. The final text of the scale-point descriptions took all these facets of the problem into consideration. As a result, the final descriptions combine theory, pragmatic con-

siderations, and practice as realistically as possible.

Two further additions were made to the scales. First, examples from parent reports were found to illustrate all of the scale points. These illustrations were added in order to further help parents identify the particular scale point that best described their own child. Finally, short paragraphs explaining the rationale of each scale, and giving instructions to parent users of the scales, were added.

Field Testing of the First Scales

One of the seven scales, "Dealing with Frustrations," has been field tested. Members of the CRP staff gave a day-long workshop for parents and teachers of preschool children, in February 1974, in a midwestern city. This workshop was built around this one scale and the lesson materials that had been developed for that scale. The general enthusiasm of the 150 participants indicated the initial success, at a practical level, of both the scale and the lessons. Few participants recorded any difficulty with the scale. All were able to place a child known to them on the scale, and then work with the lessons to adapt them to that particular child.

In analyzing the data from the workshop, it was found that all scale points were chosen. This suggests that the scale that was used spans the preschool years adequately. It was found that a few four- and five-year-olds were placed at scale points 1 and 2, while a few two-and three-year-olds were placed at one of the higher scale points. This finding suggests that children are unique (or, at least, very varied), and that it may be dangerous to assume that age alone indicates where any particular child is developmentally. However, for most of the sample, there was a firm relationship between age and scale point, with younger children tending to be rated low on the scale, and older children tending to be rated high on the scale. This result suggests that the scale is, in fact, measuring a developmental phenomenon. The relationship between age and scale point was more pronounced for girls than for boys. Perhaps girls develop more uniformly and boys more erratically in dealing with frustrations. It was further found that children who attended a church school class or a nursery school class were rated higher on the scale than those who did not. Siblings in the family, age of parents, and sex of child were not significantly associated with either a high rating or low rating.

It is hoped that field testing of all of the scales can continue during the spring and summer of 1974.

Design and Development of First "Lessons"

Five lessons* were written, one for each scale point on the "Dealing with Frustrations" scale. These were the lessons for the February Workshop. The lessons all contained the same components. A stated learning purpose describes the possible developmental step to the parent in general terms. The parent must, then, adapt the learning purpose to a specific goal (which he identifies) for his child. Parents must also adapt a lesson story or stories to their own child. Numerous projects are suggested in each lesson to get a child trying new behaviors (the specific goal). Rewards are provided, so that parents can reinforce desired behaviors. These reinforcers may be as simple as feathers to be added to a Magic Cap, or check marks on a wall chart. Parents are repeatedly reminded to adapt lesson suggestions to their own child, to try out adapted suggestions, and to evaluate their success.

These first five lessons were enthusiastically received by the February Workshop participants. This would indicate that CRP has a design for developing curricular materials for other scales.

Resources Available for Developing Curricular Materials

The resources available to CRP for writing such scale-keyed curricular materials are peculiarly apt. The existing CRP research curriculum for attitude education was developed during the 1950s. It was developed after years of research with actual children. The then most effective techniques for attitude education were built into that curriculum. The research curriculum itself is age-level oriented and spans the period from 2 years through 12th grade. Just for the preschool years there are six units of twelve lessons each for the nursery-age child (2 - 3 years) and another six units of twelve lessons each for the kindergarten-age child (4 - 5 years). Therefore, there are 144 available

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* These teaching materials were called lessons at the time of the February Workshop. Experience has demonstrated that the word "lesson" often communicates a time dimension (the day's lesson, the week's lesson, etc.) that is undesirable. The term "curricular kit" has been substituted, at least tentatively, in order to avoid a time rigidity.

lessons from which CRP can draw ideas and effective teaching techniques.

These CRP lessons were developed long before the interaction model was created. Therefore, although all curriculum objectives involve positive attitudes, the research curriculum's lesson purposes differ from the lesson purposes derived from the scale-point descriptions of the seven Self-Regard scales. In order to make use of the existing 144 lessons, two analytical projects have been conducted. The results of these projects will facilitate the construction of new, scale-point keyed teaching materials. These projects have analyzed those 144 lessons, first, by age-level teaching techniques comparing age levels and, second, by their apparent potential usefulness in lesson construction for particular scales. This analytical information is presently contained on charts which identify each and every one of those 144 lessons. In preparing lessons for a Self-Regard scale, these charts will lead one directly to those lessons in the research curriculum that contain useful material.

Summary

Much of the preparatory research for studying Self-Regard has already been accomplished. The theme of Self-Regard for preschool children has been identified. The construction of scales, based on a theoretical model, is nearing completion. Some curricular materials have been produced and enthusiastically received by parents. One scale has been field tested, at least initially, with success. There is a rich source of teaching techniques available which has been organized for efficient reference when production of curricular materials continues. It is hoped that the total research described in the Prospectus can move ahead. The stage is well set for the creation of useful and effective tools that may prove to be exceptionally helpful to parents in the education of their preschool children.

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